

Revising Minimum College Admission Standards



January 20, 2005

**Senate Committee on Early Learning,
K-12 and Higher Education**

W A S H I N G T O N
H I G H E R
EDUCATION
C O O R D I N A T I N G B O A R D

The HECB role in college admissions

- State law directs the HECB to establish minimum admission requirements for students seeking to enroll in the state's public four-year college and universities
- The board adopted the current basic standards in 1988
- Since then, the preparation required for college success has intensified, college admissions have become more competitive, and few students gain admission by meeting only the minimum requirements
- Many recent high school graduates who meet the current standards still require remedial instruction, particularly in math, in order to perform college-level work

Admission standards are important to students and schools

- State admission standards provide high school students a clear map to prepare for college
- High schools look to state admission standards to develop college-prep courses and help students evaluate their college options
- Rigorous academic preparation in high school is the best predictor of whether a student will enroll in college and earn a bachelor's degree

Why change the standards now?

- In the 2004 Strategic Master Plan, the HECB charted a new course for admission standards:
 - Define “college readiness” as the skills students need to succeed at college, and collaborate with K-12 educators to align these skills with state learning standards through grade 10
 - Work with K-12 to establish learning requirements for grades 11 and 12
 - Allow students to start college when they demonstrate they are ready
 - Ultimately, move away from “seat time” as a measure of academic readiness

Students need to know what to do while the state moves to a new system

- The state is moving incrementally toward an education system based on skills instead of classroom time
- While this change progresses, students and educators need a clear understanding now of how to prepare for college
- A revision of the current minimum basic admissions standards will help accomplish that goal

New admission standards will be the subject of public hearings

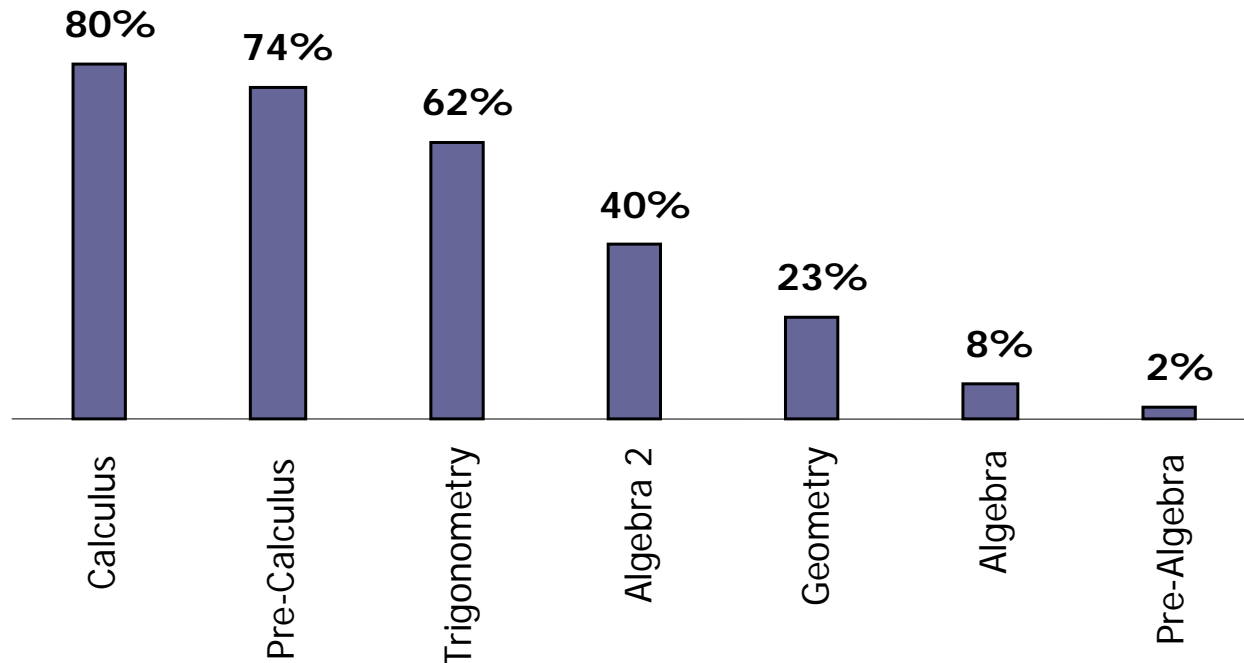
- Proposed admission standards were drafted in 2004, in close consultation with colleges and universities, with feedback from K-12 officials
- Public four-year presidents and provosts reviewed, revised and approved the draft standards
- The HECB proposal will be the subject of three public hearings in April – two in Eastern Washington and one in Western Washington

Key recommendations for freshmen entering college in fall 2008

- Increase high school math requirement from 3 to 4 years; students could choose from two sequences
- Preserve current requirement for 2 years of science, but include more lab- and algebra-based coursework
- Require students to take at least 3 year-long college prep courses each year of high school
- No change to current requirements in English, foreign language, social science and the arts
- Eliminate the statewide college Admission Index

Math achievement relates directly to college success

Percentage of high school graduates who earn bachelor's degrees based on the highest level of math studied in high school



Unfortunately, too many high school graduates lack necessary math skills

- More than 50% of students who go to college within two years of high school graduation are not prepared for college work, especially in math
- About 80% of the remedial classes for recent high school grads are in math
- The public four-year schools require almost 10% of their freshmen to take remedial classes

A related challenge: How to recapture the senior year

- Requiring at least 3 year-long college prep courses each year will ensure students stay on task through their senior year
- Just because students master a subject *sometime* during high school doesn't ensure they are ready to perform at the college level
- 'Use it or lose it' – Students need to keep their skills sharp, especially in math, science and world languages, to be ready for college

Eliminating the Admission Index

- The Admission Index is a scoring and ranking system used to evaluate high school graduates based on their grades and college test scores
- Its emphasis on grades (about 2/3 the value of the score) too often motivates students to avoid rigorous courses that might drag down their GPA

Other features of the recommendations

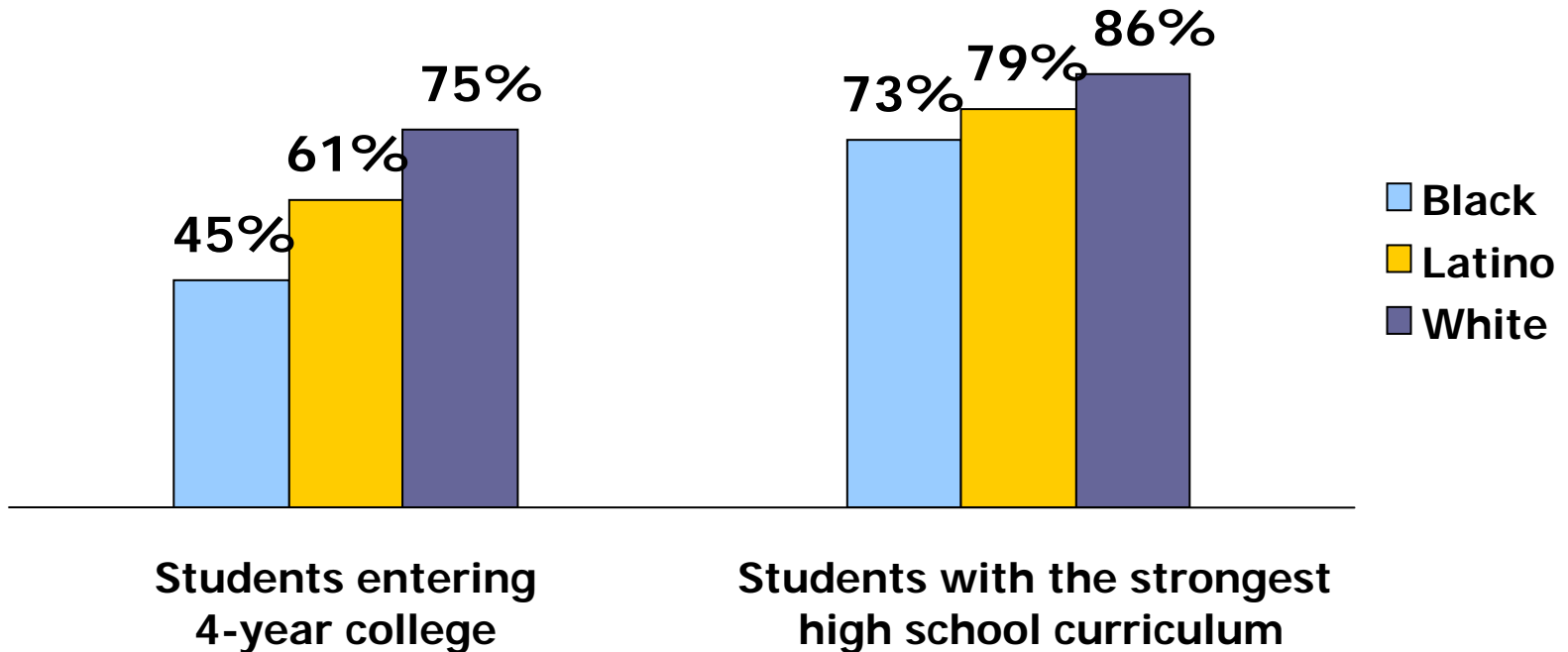
- The new standards would continue to give colleges the flexibility to admit students who do not meet the minimum standards if they demonstrate college readiness in other ways
- The new standards support K-12 reform: Students who pass the WASL would meet the first two years of high school course requirements in math and English
- Colleges may (and many will) continue to require additional preparation for students seeking freshman admission

**What about students from
disadvantaged backgrounds?**

**Won't higher standards place
additional barriers before them?**

Rigorous curriculum = Real opportunity

Bachelor's degree completion rates for high school graduates



Timetable for HECB consideration

- The HECB is scheduled to commence the rule-making process when it meets January 27
- The current timetable calls for three public hearings:
 - Spokane Riverpoint Campus – April 7, 4 p.m.
 - Highline Community College – April 12, 3 p.m.
 - Central Washington University – April 19, 4 p.m.
- Written comments also will be accepted
- The draft rules will be revised if necessary, with final board action scheduled in June 2005